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Subject: What is Christ to Me?

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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WHAT IS CHRIST TO ME?

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."—Col. i. 10,

This is to be interpreted by such passages as that of the 27th verse :

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

One of the passages fitly interprets the other. We are to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;" and Jesus Christ as formed in us, "the hope of glory," interprets that God to us, and stands for him. The command to grow in the knowledge of God requires only a very few words; but the thing itself is the labor of ages; and, as in all sciences and in every school of philosophy, growth has been hindered by wrong methods, so that science began and went out, almost, with Aristotle, because false methods were applied; and it waited for the days of Bacon and the modern school before any great advance was made. History was but clustering fables until the philosophic methods of history were developed. And, as the development of science in every department—for instance, physiology, the science of the mind, etc.—stumbled and blundered by wrong methods, coming continually short, and began to brighten and bear fruit so soon as right methods were found out and made use of; so the knowledge of God has waited through the ages for

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right methods. It has been pursued in various ways; and yet no other subject so important has received so little increment, compared with the time during which the world has existed and the human mind has been active, as this one matter—the knowledge of God.

It is made the central and critical relation of Christ to every human soul. As we are to be saved by our faith in Jesus Christ, it becomes a matter of transcendent importance to each one of us to know Christ, to increase in our knowledge of him, and therefore to know how to increase in that knowledge. The fact is that very few persons now have any view or experience in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ as the interpreter of God's nature, which answers at all either to the experience of the apostles, or to that which they aimed at in their preaching.

The question therefore comes up with emphasis: Is Jesus Christ so presented to men that they may reap the best fruits of faith? Are the methods of presentation the wisest and the best? Are the modes of study which are employed by the great mass of Christian people the best and the wisest? It is to the consideration of this general subject that I shall devote this morning's discourse.

To his personal disciples the relation of Christ was one of intense admiration and love. With all the glow and enthusiasm which belongs to heroic friendship, they loved Jesus during his life. Not only that, but after the bewilderment of his crucifixion was over, and after his resurrection became an article of assured faith to them, they continued to have an intense personal love for him. It was in each case the fidelity of a clansman to his chief. It was the enthusiasm of a man in regard to some high and noble friend.

The expectation, doubtless, of soon seeing him again increased the intensity of this feeling—for all the early years of Christendom were passed in the expectation of the immediate coming of Christ. It was the whole aim of the apostles to inspire in every man just this personal love and enthusiasm toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Does it exist? I do not ask whether men say "Lord, Lord," enough. I do not ask whether men say they are

going to act thus and so "for Christ's sake;" that they must "honor Christ;" that they must "glorify Jesus." Of words there are enough. The question is far deeper than that. Is there an intense inward consciousness of the reality, the presence, the love, and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ which gives to many men such an impulse that they can say that their "life is hid with Christ in God" ?

Is there any such affection as this? Christ is the *neighbor* of a great many persons: does he abide in their households? Does he come into their midst? Does he dwell with them, and do they dwell with him? An intense personal love for the Lord Jesus Christ being the germinant element, the beginning experience, so far as his relation with men was concerned, it was to this that the apostles directed all their exertion. Hence, the first argument was an argument to disabuse the Jewish mind of its prejudices, and to show the serious-minded and moral men among the Jews that Jesus answered to the Old Testament description of the Messiah. Therefore, in the preaching and in the letters of the apostles, the views of Jesus Christ in relation to the prejudices and education of the Jews, in relation to the text of the Old Testament, in relation to the Jewish sacrifices, and in relation to foregone history, figure largely; and much of modern theology has been similarly occupied in presenting views of Jesus Christ in relation to certain national Jewish prejudices or notions.

Now, we have no such history as the Jews had; we have no such prejudices as they had; we have no such system as they had; we have no sacrifices; we have no altars; we have no priesthood; and to present Christ to us in the same way that he was presented to the Jews would be utterly void, unless by education you raised up an artificial condition which should be equivalent to that of the Jewish system. To a certain extent, this has been done. A most extraordinary thing is the artificial view into which men have been educated in order to make modern theology match with the relative arguments of the apostles on the subject of Christ's relations to the old Jewish national system.

If I wished to stimulate our people in New England to heroism, do you suppose I would talk to them of Marathon

and Pultowa? I would talk to them of Bunker Hill and Lexington. If I were in Louisiana, and wished to inspire patriotism in the people there, I would not talk to them of Waterloo or of Wagram: I would talk to them of the battle of New Orleans and of the defeat of Pakenham. It is not wise to attempt to inspire men with a heroic sense of the Lord Jesus Christ by preaching to them of an altar that for two thousand years has not existed; of a temple that was long ago in ruins; or of a ritual that they never saw, and that is a mere historical reminiscence. There must be an inspiration that shall open Christ up to our sympathy and reason as he was opened up to the sympathy and reason of the Jews. The genius of the philosophy of the apostles was peculiarly to develop the character of Christ in such a way as to meet the special national want which existed in their time; and the peculiar nature of our theology should be to meet that want which is the outgrowth of our national education.

As the Christian religion went forth and began to take hold of and subdue the mind of the world, it fell naturally first into the Greek line of thought; and it was made a matter largely of mental philosophy. During the period of the gestation of theology, Christ's nature, his relation to the Godhead, and his equality or non-equality with God—all these elements were profoundly discussed. Christ Jesus, when the Greek philosophy prevailed, was presented to the human mind in his dynastic relations, as a part of the reigning Deity—as belonging to the imperial God. More and more this took place, so that men had a psychological problem put to them instead of a solving process. They had an analyzed, arranged, classified God; and he was to them what, to a lover of flowers, is a *hortus siccus*—an herbarium in which last summer's plants have been skillfully culled and dried and arranged with reference to their genera and species and varieties. There they all are; none of them are growing; they are all dried; but they are scientific. The work of the Greek mind on the character of God was to analyze it, to classify its relations and parts, and to present it to the world as a problem in mental philosophy applied to theology.

Then, coming down still further, theology became Romanized. The Romans introduced the legal element into it. Instead of having a simple personal Christ such as the Jews had ; or instead of having a psychological problem such as the Greeks had, they had a scheme of theology which treated of the moral government of God, of the Law-giver, of the Atoner, of the Spirit, and of the Church. At length the administration of religion and theology fell into priestly hands, and became a power more universal and more imperious than any that ever was developed on earth in any other direction. The imagination, the reason and the conscience were all put into the hands of the priest who exercised authority over the soul, and personal liberty died out. Men believed in God as the Church believed in him, and the Church believed in God as they were taught to believe by the imperial view.

Thus, in the third estate, Christ, instead of being simply a person standing in personal relations to each man that sought him, had become the center of a great system of moral government ; and away down to the early days of this generation we almost never heard of Christ as a person. During all my early life I heard of sinfulness—though that I did not need to hear about ; for my own soul, and my own poor stumbling life taught me enough on that subject. I also heard of the Atonement of Christ. But almost never did I hear of *Christ*. He was something that I was to find after I had got through certain enigmas ; after I had, as it were, been initiated, and had gone through certain stages, and become a sort of mason. Religion was regarded as a kind of masonry in which one passed in at a certain gate, giving a certain signal, and took certain successive steps, and rose through certain gradations, and at last came to a point where Christ was opened up to him. After the law had been shown to me, and I had gone through a process of repentance, and become regenerated, there was to be a Christ for me ; but Christ was never presented to me when I was young as a great influencing power operating in *advance* of all other things. I had come to my majority before I had such a view of Christ. One of the most extraordinary epochs of my life was the hour (I never knew how nor exactly why) in which I discovered, or

in which it dawned upon me, that I had a *personal Christ* as something separable from problems of mental philosophy, from the church, from any plan of salvation, and from any doctrine of atonement—a living, loving God, whom I had a right to approach in my own personality, and who had toward me such feelings as made me welcome to come to him at any time. The opening of that conception to me was the beginning of the revolution of my life. I should not have been here to-day, nor through the last quarter of a century, but for that single view of Christ which rose upon me with healing in its beams.

A personal Saviour, to be studied and learned, must be presented in such a way that we can make him personal to ourselves. This was done in part by that great revulsion called the *Protestant Reformation*. Salvation by faith was the glory of Luther. He unquestionably had in his own inward experience the right element; but it does not follow that the presentation of it was the one which was the best adapted to enlighten the whole world. Experience has shown that it was not. It was much covered with habits and prejudices and philosophies; for no man can throw off in a moment the opinions of the ages of which he is a child and product. Everywhere, when a philosophy is renounced, it still lives. Its detritus remains. Men find a thousand prejudices and habits clinging to them after they have abandoned the beliefs which begot these incumbrances. When a philosophy has been set aside the fruit stays by, for good if it was good, and for bad if it was bad.

In the main, by the Protestant system Christ was presented as a part of theology in a certain way; and although the element Christ Jesus, as a living God, was the glory and the secret power of that system, yet it was not brought out and freed from the accumulations and incrustations of the ages.

We come, now, to the truth that a personal Saviour must be studied from the stand-point of one's own soul. It is not the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, it is not his relation to the divine government, it is not his relation to a system of theology, but it is his relation to *you*, as representing very God, that you are to study. His personal rela-

tion to your wants—to your understanding, to your imagination, to your moral sense, to your yearnings, to your strivings—this is the only point at which you can come to any knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that shall be available to you.

This will bring us back to the apostolic experience. It will bring us back to the interior element of Christianity as distinguished from those external elements which have been thrown around about it. It will bring us from Jewish misconceptions, from the Grecized view, from the Roman view, and from the heterogeneous modern view, to the Lord Jesus himself, the Saviour of the world, by faith in whom each soul is to be redeemed.

First, we are to understand that he is to our thought God,—by which I do not mean that any man can define God. No man can take a pencil and mark the features of Jehovah, and say, “Thus far is God, and no farther.” How poor a God must that be whom I can understand ! He would be no larger than the measure of my thought—and that would be small indeed. No man can limit and define God. After all intellectual statements have been made, after all definitions have been given, immensely more is left untouched than has been touched. But the functions of the divine nature, the quality of that nature and its moral essence, one may suspect or know without comprehending all of God.

Bring me but a glass of water and I know what water is. I may not know, if I am untraveled, what are the springs in the mountain, what are cascades, what are the streams that thunder through deep gorges, what are broadening rivers, what are bays, or what is the ocean; and yet I may know what water is. A drop on my finger tells me its quality. From that I know that it is not wood, that it is not rock, that it is not air, that it is not anything but water.

I am not able by searching to find out God unto perfection; and yet I know that, so far as I have found him out, and so far as he is ever going to be found out, whatever there is in nobility, whatever there is in goodness, whatever there is in sweetness, whatever there is in patience; whatever can be revealed by the cradle, by the crib, by the couch, by the table; whatever there is in household love and in other loves;

whatever there is in heroism among men; whatever there is of good report; whatever has been achieved by imagination or by reason; whatever separates man from the brute beast, and lifts him above the clod,—I know that all these elements belong to God, the eternal and universal Father. Although I may not be able to draw an encyclopediac circle and say, “All inside of that is God, and anything outside of it is not God;” yet I know that everything which tends upward, that everything which sets from a lower life to a higher, that everything which leads from the basilar to the coronal, that everything whose results are good, is an interpretation of God, who, though he may be found to be other than we suppose, will be found to be not less, but more glorious than we suspect.

Every man, then, is to understand that Christ represents God, so far as the human mind is in a condition to understand and take him in. I find no difficulty in saying that Christ is God, because I never undertake to weigh God with scales or to measure him with compasses. There are men who have sat down and ciphered God out; they have figured up the matters of omnipotence, of omniscience and of omnipresence; they have marked the limits to which the Divine power can go; they can tell why God may do so and so, and why he may not do this, that or the other; and I can understand how they should raise objections to saying that Christ is God. To some extent we may comprehend the divine nature in certain points; but God is too large, not simply for the intelligence of individuals, but for the intelligence of the race itself, though it has been developed for many ages. If it should be developed through countless ages to come, it would still be incapable of understanding God, so vast and voluminous is he; and yet I find no difficulty in saying, “Christ is God.” So far as the human mind is competent to understand the constituent elements of the divine nature they are in Jesus Christ, and he presents them to us.

I draw out from my pocket a little miniature, and look upon it, and tears drop from my eyes. What is it? A piece of ivory. What is on it? A face that some artist has painted there. It is a radiant face. My history is connected with it. When I look upon it tides of feeling swell in me. Some

one comes to me and says, "What is that?" I say, "It is my mother." "Your mother! I should call it a piece of ivory with water-colors on it." To me it is my mother. When you come to scratch it and analyze it and scrutinize the elements of it, to be sure it is only a sign or dumb show, but it brings to me that which is no sign nor dumb show. According to the law of my mind, through it I have brought back, interpreted, refreshed, revived, made potent in me, all the sense of what a loving mother was.

So I take my conception of Christ as he is painted in dead letters on dead paper; and to me is interpreted the glory, the sweetness, the patience, the love, the joy-inspiring nature of God; and I do not hesitate to say, "Christ is my God," just as I would not hesitate to say of that picture, "It is my mother."

"But," says a man, "you do not mean that you really sucked at the breast of that picture?" No, I did not; but I will not allow any one to drive me into any such minute analysis as that.

Now I hold that the Lord Jesus Christ, as represented in the New Testament, brings to my mind all the effluence of brightness and beauty which I am capable of understanding. I can take in no more. He is said to be the express image of God's glory. He transcends infinitely my reach; for when I have gone to the extent of my capacity there is much that I cannot attain to.

When, therefore, Christ is presented to me I will not put him in the multiplication table, I will not make him a problem in arithmetic or in mathematics; I will not stand and say, "How can three be one?" or "How can one be three?" I will interpret Christ by the imagination and the heart. Then he will bring to me a conception of God such as the heavens never, in all their glory, declared; such as the earth has never revealed, either in ancient or modern times. He reveals to us a God whose interest in man is inherent, and who through his mercy and goodness made sacrifices for it. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it. What is the only begotten Son of God? Who knows? Who cares to know? That his only begotten

Son is precious to him we may know, judging from the experience of an earthly father; and we cannot doubt that when he gave Christ to come into life, and humble himself to man's condition, and take upon himself an ignominious death, he sacrificed that which was *exceedingly dear* to him. And this act is a revelation of the feeling of God toward the human race.

There had sat and thundered Jupiter, striking the imagination of men; there had been the Grecian deities, good and bad, reaching through the great mythological realm of the fancy; there had been the grotesque idols of the heathen; these things had given to the world a thousand strange phantasies and vagrant notions; but nothing had given men a true conception of God until Christ came, declaring that God so loved the world that he gave the best thing he had to save it.

Now, measure what the meaning of that truth is. Away, ye Furies ! Away, ye Fates ! Away, ignoble conceptions of Greece, of Rome, and of outlying barbarous nations ! Heaven is now made radiant by the Son of God, teaching us that at the center of power, of wisdom and of government, sits the all-paternal love, and that it is the initial of God. It is the Alpha and the Omega; and the literature and lore of divinity must be interpreted according to its genius. God so loved the world, before it loved him, knowing its condition, that he gave his only Son to die for it. This is the interpretation of the everlasting sacrifice of the divine nature in the way of loving. Jesus Christ epitomizes, represents, interprets God to us as the central fountain, source and supply of transcendent benevolence and love in the universe. This intense interest and love in God works to the development of every soul toward him. It is not divine indifference. It is not divine good-nature. It is not divine passivity. It is a parent's desire for a child's development from evil toward goodness, toward purity, toward sweetness, toward godliness. God is one who is laborious and self-sacrificing, seeking the race, not because they are so good, but to make them good, stimulating them, inspiring them, and desiring above all things else that they shall be fashioned away from the animal toward his

sonship. That is the drift and direction of the divine government.

It is said that to preach God's love effeminates the mind. It is said that it makes men careless and indifferent. It is said, "If God is a great central Love, why, then, it does not make much difference how men live." Ah! the truth as it is set forth in the Bible is, that God loves in such a way as to urge men forward to that which is high and ennobling. Through love he chastens and pierces by way of stirring men up. By joy and by sorrow, by pleasure and by pain, by all means, God seeks to make the objects of his love worthy of himself. He that loves only to degrade is infernal. He that loves so that the object of his love withers under his influence loves as fire loves, consuming to ashes that which it loves. No one has true love who does not know that it is the inspiration of nobility; that it is a power which is carrying its object upward, being willing to suffer for the sake of lifting it higher and higher. That is the test of man's love, because God has given it to us as the test of his own love.

Every man, then, is to seek Jesus Christ personally. The way of salvation is the way of heart-faith in Christ. He represents God, and God represents love, and love represents development from sinfulness toward righteousness. And every man is to seek this Christ as interpreting God to us for his own sake. The perception of Christ's relations to one's own salvation is a thousand times more important than a perception of his relation to the Old Testament, or to the Godhead, or to theology, or to the history of the church. It is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" that the apostle was to preach. Your own want—the want of your character and of your whole nature—that is to be the starting-point in every investigation in this direction. "What is Christ to me?" is to be the question.

When for ten days the *Java* had sailed without an observation, and when, at last, there came an opportunity to take one, did the captain take it for the sake of navigation at large? No; he took it to find out first of all where the good ship was on her voyage. Not that navigation was of no account; not that astronomy was of no account; but that

observation was taken for the sake of that particular ship on that particular voyage.

I do not undertake to say that there is nothing else to be thought of in the world but one's own spiritual condition; but I do say that the prime consideration with every man is, "What is Christ to my soul?" How does your soul need Christ? How does he interpret himself as being the outlet of every want in your nature? These are the all-important inquiries which concern you.

No man can have another man's Christ—if you will not misunderstand my words and pervert my meaning. As a physician is who stands over you in sickness, so is Christ Jesus. What to your thought a teacher is who labors with you according to your ignorance, that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

When, during the famine in Ireland, the benevolent people of this country sent provision to the thousands who were starving there, a government ship—a man-of-war—was appointed to take it over; and never was there an armament that slew prejudices and animosities as did the cargo which was discharged out of the sides of that old frigate. But when the vessel arrives in Ireland, we will suppose one set of the inhabitants go down to the shore where she lies at anchor, and say, "This thing is to be looked at in the light of naval architecture." Another set go down, and say, "A government vessel! What is the relation of government to the wants of a people who are suffering from hunger? What business has a government to send provision in a war-ship?" They are disposed to discuss the question in the light of civil polity. Another set go down and say, "Wheat and potatoes: what is the excellence of wheat compared with that of potatoes, chemically considered?" The suffering men stand on the shore and cry, "Our fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters are dying for the want of food: unload! *unload!* UNLOAD!" But those who are standing by interpose, and say, "You do not believe in chemistry; you do not believe in civil government; you do not believe in architecture!" I preach Christ as every man's Saviour; as his strength; as his bread; as his water; as his life; as his joy;

as his hope. I say everything is trash as compared with that; and men exclaim, "Loose theology! He does not care for the church, nor for ordinances, nor for the Trinity, nor for the atonement, nor for a plan of salvation!"

When men are starving it is not the time to talk of ships, of navigation, or of what government may or may not do: it is the time to talk of wheat and meat. Corn and beef are better than politics under such circumstances.

Now, when men are under heavy burdens that they do not know how to bear, is there a Burden-Bearer anywhere? When men are unilluminated, is there any Light in this world? When men are in trouble, and cannot see their way out of it, and they say, in despair, "The day of my birth be cursed, and the day of my death be blessed!" is there any Hope that shines forth and makes the darkness of the future bright as a morning star in the horizon? Is there anything in the Lord Jesus Christ that you need? Is there anything for you, who are sorrowing for your companion that has been smitten down; for you, whose affection has been disappointed; for you, who are heartsick from hope deferred; for you, whose affairs are all in a tangle; for you, whose prosperity is like pasture-ground which the plow has turned upside down to prepare for new and unknown harvests? Is there anything in him for me—for me, that am poor; for me, that am desolate; for me, that am stripped and peeled of all that makes life desirable; for me, that am smitten and cast down; for me, that am struggling to perform a task that I do not understand; for me, who am aiming at that which I cannot reach; for me, whose days are well-nigh spent; for me, a little child; for me, a boy at school; for me, an apprentice; for me, a pauper; for me, that am to be hanged? That is the soul's cry through life.

What does it matter to me that the Jews had a system, that the Greeks had a system, or that the Romans had a system? Let their systems go to the dust. What do I care for such things when I am rolling in pain that I cannot endure? Then, if there is anything in the universe which will relieve my suffering, I want it.

Have you ever had a fever? Have you ever tossed all night with hateful dreams, and waked in the morning parched

and well-nigh perishing with thirst? Have you ever felt as though you would give the world for a drop of water? Go to a person who is in that condition, and read to him the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *Romeo and Juliet*. What does he care for them? "Oh, for a drop of water!" is his cry. Read to him *Bacon's Maxims*. What does he care for *Bacon's Maxims*? He cries, "Water!" Read to him the most exquisite literature the world has known. He will not listen. "Give me water! Give me water!" he says. The whole sum of his being is concentrated in that one want, and it dominates. The way to give him other things is to supply first that overmastering want.

When men are in their sins, and they wander, wayward, in the dark, longing for something—they know not what, Christ says, "I am the Way; I am the Light." Art thou the way out of this tangle? Art thou my unclouded light which no storm can dissipate or blow out? When men are hungering, art thou, Jesus, the soul's food? Is there something in God as interpreted by Christ that shall meet every want in the human soul? Yes, there is just that.

Are you a little child? The glory of the incarnation is that Christ was a little child. There is no little child in whose path Jesus has not walked, or one that was exactly like it. He knows every child's experience—his hopes and fears; his expectations and disappointments; his pleasures and pains; his joys and sorrows. It may not help him that he knows your troubles; but it helps you to know that he knows them.

Christ was in his early life subject to his parents. Even after he was filled with the divine afflatus, so that he disputed with the doctors in the temple, he went back home, and submitted himself to the control of his father and mother. With conscious power and glory, he put himself under the direction of those who were inferior to him, willingly and cheerfully.

If you are toiling in an unrequited way in life, think how Christ labored. Old Galilee was mixed up with all manner of detritus. People from every nation under the Roman banner had flocked thither. A vast cosmopolitan population was

gathered there. And there Christ was brought up as a Jew. He learned the trade which his father followed. He worked at the bench. When a young man, by laboring with his hands he scraped up a small competence with which to buy his daily bread. Every man that toils, then, has in Christ one that has been like him.

Are you turmoiled and driven hither and thither, not knowing where to lay your head ? The Son of man had not where to lay his head. The birds had nests ; the foxes had holes ; the very sea was allowed to rest at times ; but Jesus almost never rested. By day and by night, and everywhere, he was a man of sorrow and of toil.

Are you abiding at home ? Are you happy and contented ? There are no sweeter pictures in the Bible than those which portray the joys of Christ at the festivities which he attended, and in the thousand ways in which he made others happy. In creating so much happiness he could not but have been happy himself.

Christ stands for men in all their relations. He stands for them in their crimes. I do not know why it should be so, but it seems to me there is nothing else—not even the scene of the cross itself—that touches me so much as the incident which took place when he came back to Capernaum and was surrounded by rich men, and was invited to go to a feast in a nobleman's house. As he entered, a crowd, among whom were publicans and harlots, pressed in after him, and actually sat down at the table with him, unbidden, and ate with him. Those who were looking on stood, and pointed, and said, "See, he eateth with publicans and sinners !" Eating with another is a sign of hospitality and friendship and fidelity. Christ's conduct toward these poor creatures awoke a ray of hope in their most desperate depravity. It is this light which dawns in the midnight of the human soul that touches me. That which affects me is the voice that goes far down to the depths below where hope usually goes, and says to the child of sin and sorrow, "There is salvation for you." God does not cast away even the most depraved. The man who lies right by the lion's head ; the man who is half brother to the wolf ; the man who slimes his way with the worm—even he

has One who thinks kindly of him, and says to him, "Thee, too, have I called ; for thee I have a refuge and a remedy."

There was but one single class that Christ had no mercy for, and that was the class who had no mercy for themselves. I mean those men whose intellects were cultivated, whose imaginations were cultivated, whose moral sense was cultivated, but who turned all their talents into selfishness. They were dissipated by the top of the brain. Christ did not disregard dissipation of the passions ; he regarded it as evil in the extreme ; but he regarded the dissipation of the top of the brain as worse still. He said to those proud proprietaries, those men who had outward and not inward morals, those men who knew so much, and used their knowledge to oppress others with ; who were so scrupulous about themselves, but did not care for anybody else—he said to them, pointing at those miserable harlots and those extortionate publicans, "You never do such things as they are guilty of doing, oh no ; and yet they have a better chance of going to heaven than you have."

Even in the case of Zaccheus, when he said, "Lord, I am trying to do right," Christ said, "Come down ; I will go to thy house." There was not a creature on earth who felt the need of a Saviour to whom Christ did not at once open the door of his heart ; and the beauty of it was that Christ's heart stood open for all that were behind him, or before him, or on either side of him. When Christ came from the eternal sphere he brought with him as much of God as he could put into the conditions which he was to assume ; as much as the human mind could comprehend ; and though he laid aside that part of his being by reason of the circumstances in which he was to be placed, yet having entered upon our estate, when he spake, God spake ; and when he showed mercy, it was an exhibition of God's mercy.

Now, have any of you, interested in the study of the texts of Scripture, considered the subject of your own want ; of your own hope ; of your own fear ; of your own strivings ; of your own unworthiness ; of your own longings of soul ; and have you said, "Lord, being what I am, what canst thou do for me ?" Have you said, "What canst thou do for one who is slow and lethargic ? What canst thou do for one who is

always behind his conception ?” There is a Christ for just such an one as that. Have you said, “Lord, what canst thou do for a fiery nature?” There is a divine power for those that are fiery. Have you said, “Lord, what canst thou do for me that am proud and hard ?” There is a God of love and mercy for such as you are. Have you ever said, “What canst thou do for dispositions that are cold and selfish ?” There is a medicine for just such dispositions. Have you said, “Lord, what canst thou do for those who are self-seeking ?” There is provision for them, too.

Oh come, ye that are weary and heavy laden ; oh come, all ye that are sinful ; oh come, all ye who feel the burden of your sin : to you, to-day, I preach a risen Christ. I preach to-day no plan and no atonement, although there is a plan and there is an atonement. But that which you want is a living Saviour. What you want is a person that your mind can think about as you think about your father and mother, your brother and sister, your friend, your physician, your deliverer, your leader, your guide.

Such is Christ. Such is he—ready to be over against every want. Being the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Alphabet, he is the sum of the whole literature. He is the highest of all. He is broader than the earth. He is universal in sympathy. He says to every man, “I am the Sun of righteousness.”

What art thou, O Sun ? Thou that bringest back from captivity the winter day ; thou that teachest all the dead things in the earth to find themselves again ; thou that dost drive the night away from the weary eyes of watchers ; thou that art the universal bounty-giver ; thou that dost travel endlessly carrying benefactions immeasurable, illimitable, beyond want and conception of want—thou art the figure that represents God ; and God is as much greater in bounty and mercy and power than thou art as spirit is greater than matter. For the sun is a spark. Around about the brow of him that reigns are suns sparkling as jewels in a crown. What, then, is that God who is accustomed to speak of himself to us as the Sun of righteousness that arises with healing in his beams ?

If there are those who have been accustomed to judge of their hope by their life alone ; by whether they are living right or wrong ; by whether they are living in a constant state of self-condemnation, and under a perpetual state of bondage to their conscience or not, then they only know one thing—that they are *striving*, with a greater or less degree of earnestness. And they mourn, saying, “I am so insincere ! I am so cold ! I so often promise and do not fulfill !” Why, that it is to be man.

The doctor has come. He has taken charge of the patient that has been near to the border of death. The crisis is past ; and he says to the child, “You are going to get well. I have got the upper hand of the disease.” The next day, in the afternoon, the physician comes again ; and the poor child lifts up its hands and says, “Doctor, I know that I am not going to get well. Not long after you went away, yesterday, a pain shot through me here ; and I am sure I am not going to get well. I cannot sleep ; I am very, very tired ; and I can see no hope.” “Well,” says the doctor, “if you did not have pain you would not be sick. To be sick is to have poor digestion ; it is to have that kingdom of the devil, the liver, the scene of all manner of impish tricks ; it is to have various signs of weakness and disease ; but I have begun to get the ascendancy, and you are going to recover. To-day you may walk across the room.” The child walks feebly, and is faint, and goes back to the couch, and says, “It is just as I thought—I am not going to get well.” The very weakness clouds the sight of a beginning of strength, and makes hope hang heavily. The despondency is a portion of the disease.

So it is with people in spiritual things ; and oh, if the continuity of your fight against evil, and your salvation, depended on your strength and fidelity, you might feel discouraged ; but who is He that has called you ? Who is He that has said, “I carry your lineaments on the palm of my hand, as one carries the portrait of a friend in his hand, and you are ever in my memory. A mother may forget her suckling child, but I will not forget thee.” The eternal God, who bears up the orbs of the universe, with whom is no weariness, no variableness, no shadow of turning, has bowed down his

love, and has shown himself to be God, in that he has had compassion on you; and your hope lies in him. It is because of the fidelity and grandeur of his continuing love, and not because you are virtuous and strong and skillful and wise, that you are to hope.

Sleep, child, though the storm rages. But suppose the little passenger, tossed about by the waves on the good staunch ship, should go on deck to see if it could not do something? What can a child do with the Atlantic Ocean? What can a child do with a scowling, howling northern storm? What can a child do with a ship that he does not understand? But there is the old sturdy captain, who is gruff to the passengers, and gruffer yet to nature. He weathers the storm, and brings the ship safe into harbor. Then, when all the smiles and glory of the continent seem to light up the great bay, how grateful everybody is! How willing the passengers all are to sign a letter congratulating the good captain!

God is the Captain who directs this great world-ship; and though he will not always speak when you want him to, yet he carries you, night and day, safely on the stormy sea; and ere long he will bring you safely into port; and when he has brought you in, and you see him as he is, no word can describe, no experience can interpret, nothing that has entered into the heart of man can conceive, the rapture and joy which we shall feel. When we are lifted up out of this lower realm, and we stand in the celestial sphere and behold our Deliverer, we shall be satisfied. O, word of wonder, to one wandering through the earth among men, and finding no home—*satisfied*! We do not yet know what that means; but you and I and all of us are rushing fast toward the day when we shall stand, without spot or blemish, and shall see Him as he is, and shall be like him. We shall be satisfied; and that will be heaven!

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE rejoice, O Lord, that we are permitted to draw near to thee, taught not alone by thy Word, nor by the experience of those in every age who have found thee, but by that which thou hast given to us of thyself, and by which we turn ourselves in strength and in wisdom and in attainment toward children, toward the ignorant and toward the imperfect. We recognize it as a gift from God. It is not from beneath: it is of thee; and by it we interpret thee. Thou art greater in Fatherhood than any of us know how to be. If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him! We come toward thee as toward an All-helping goodness. By whatever name thou mayest be known, thou art a God of love and of mercy, seeking by all means to lift up those who are low; to inspire those who are dark; to give comfort and grace to those who are needy; to sustain those who are ready to perish. All the universe beneath thy brooding hand is rising up and moving upward. All men are carried along upon the divine currents, even when they understand them not. Thou art compassing the great ends of thy government through the changes which are going on in all the earth; and we rejoice that toward the future there is brightness that grows brighter and brighter. We rejoice that the chaos, that the formless void, is left behind, and that the earth, created by thee, and bearing the race, moves forward. Thou art its Leader; and though thou dost direct it through darkling ways, though thou dost cause it to move through ways that are strange and mysterious, yet we believe in thee. We believe that thou art a safe Guide of every soul that puts its trust in thee, and that thou wilt save the nations. Thou leadest us from the clod, away from the beasts, above all that is low in man, towards purity and power in righteousness, until, being sons of God, disguised, one by one we lay aside the disguise at last, and stand the sons of light, crowned in thy presence, and received with ineffable joy in the midst of the heavenly host, henceforth to be priests and kings of God.

Grant unto us enough of this faith, O our Father, to keep us in mind thereof, that we may not think ourselves to be dull beasts of burden; that we may not think ourselves to be particles blown about by every wind that chance sends racketing through the world; that we may not feel discouraged, and give over the conflict as if everything was adverse to us, and nothing was for us. Grant that our thoughts may lift themselves up in spite of sorrow and darkness and trouble to the ever-living victory that awaits those who will inherit it. Grant that there may come forth this morning from thy throne to every waiting heart here a sense of God present and inspiring it. May Jesus Christ be born again. Even though it be as a babe, O come to every heart, and grow therein, and fill it with thine own self, and give to human faculty divine power.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt purge away all dross. Drive out all darkness. Take away all weakness, and put in its place divine strength. Give us the interpretation, so far as we need it, of thy

daily providence. If we cannot interpret nor see, then give us faith by which we may trust thee. As we trust tried friends, and know them, and lean upon them, and are sure that they will never break down under any load that we put upon them, so may our souls trust thee. Living, dying, for time, for eternity, everywhere, in all that is dear to us, in our affections, in our friendships, in our labors, in our ambitions, in whatever of experience is laid upon us, day by day, may we have the underlying strength of God, and may we lean upon it and rest in it. May we know something of thy bosom as well as of thine outstretched hand. We behold thee working wondrously upon the earth. Thou art the Potter indeed, fashioning worlds into vessels as it pleaseth thee. O grant that we may know something, not of thy shape, but of thy nature. Grant that we may know something of thee, not as an Architect of material things, but as One who has power over the soul. O, let thine inmost soul speak to us and say, Henceforth I call thee not slaves, but friends; and let us know what the Lord doeth in our secret thought and feeling. We pray that thou wilt give to every one in thy presence the strength which he needs to-day. If we have joy, grant that it may be a joy purified; and that it may become perennial. If we have doubt, grant the solution of that doubt. If it be vague and undefined trouble that is upon us, grant us release. O thou that dost breathe upon the cloud and lift the mist and reveal the shore to the perplexed mariner, give at last to those who seek the truth and know it not, a revelation of that truth. Comfort the weak. Speak forgiveness of sins to the guilty conscience.

We pray that thou wilt help every one to do the thing that is right where trials are, and where it is hard to carry the yoke and the cross. Fulfill yet again to-day the promise ten thousand times fulfilled before. Make thy burden light, and thy yoke easy, and thy cross life-giving.

Bless not us alone, but all who are dear to us. We pray for our children; for our companions; for all who have labored with us in word or in doctrine, or in the works of life, wherever they may be.

We pray that thou wilt grant that the Spirit of love and purity and divine wisdom may rest in power upon all who are in authority. Bless the President of these United States, and all that are joined with him. We pray for the Congress assembled. Bless all the legislatures. Bless governors, and judges, and magistrates of every grade. Bless the whole citizenship of this great republic. We pray that thou wilt lead us in right ways. May our strength stand in our righteousness. May all the nations of the earth, looking upon us, behold the better way, the way of knowledge—and may superstition flee away before it; show us the way of virtue—and may all intemperate wickedness be destroyed; keep us in the way of godliness and of truth and of piety. So may thy promises be fulfilled. So at last may the earth begin to round into perfect light. May the darkness pass away, and the morning come whose sun shall never go down. So, at last, do thou, that wert born on earth in feebleness, stand again to reign a thousand years in everlasting strength and glory.

And to thy name, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be the praise evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we pray that thy word may be a comfort to souls that are cast down, and an inspiration to those that are not stirred. We pray that Jesus may rise upon our thought—though not upon our thought except by our thought to be conveyed to our want. Draw near to every one of us. See what we need inwardly. If thou art our Lover, O Lord Jesus Christ; if thou art a Lover whose love has been measured by death for us, and for each one of us by name; if such is the measure by which to interpret thy love, then we call upon Love to help us. We have a right to thee, O Love. We have a right to thy power; we have a right to thy patience; we need thee sorely. We call on thee, O thou blessed, loving Jesus, because we are blind; because we are hungry; because we are poor and sinful and undeserving. We call on thee for thy bounty, that we may be clothed, that we may be fed, that we may be wholesome and beautiful. So may we stand clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and be received in our Father's house, when the conflict and struggle, the wonder and mystery of life are over, to go no more out forever, and be as the angels of God. And to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, we give the praise of our salvation, forever and forever. *Amen.*

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
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